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(56) Documents cited
GB 2196237 A GB 2179240 A GB 2143427 A
GB 1299596 A

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(54) Food processing mat

(57) The mat comprises a flexible polypropylene sheet 1 having a uniform thickness of about 1,200 microns (1.2 mm) and being of rectangular shape with rounded corners. To minimise the risk of cross-contamination a set of such mats each carry the name of a different foodstuff with which the mat is to be used. A cutting or similar food processing operation can be performed on the mat, following which the mat can be lifted and formed into a guide channel 3. Any pieces of food or food waste can then be tipped along the guide channel into a clean receptacle or a disposal bin.

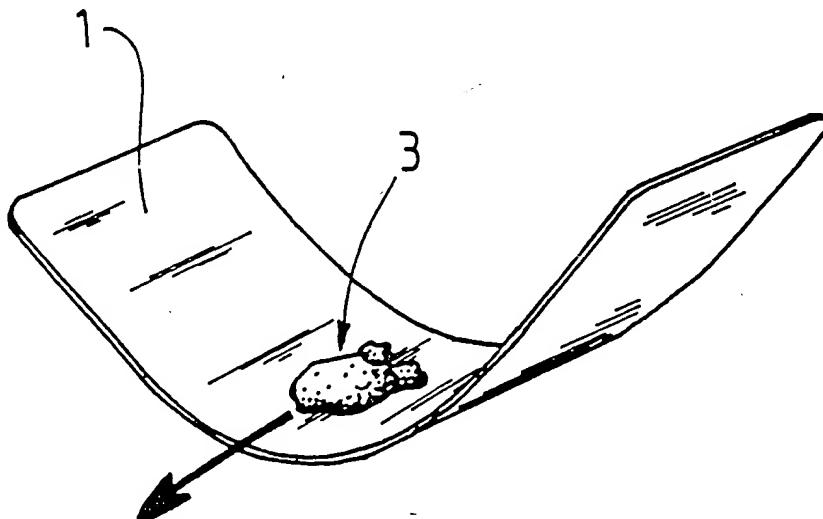


FIG 2

At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1990.

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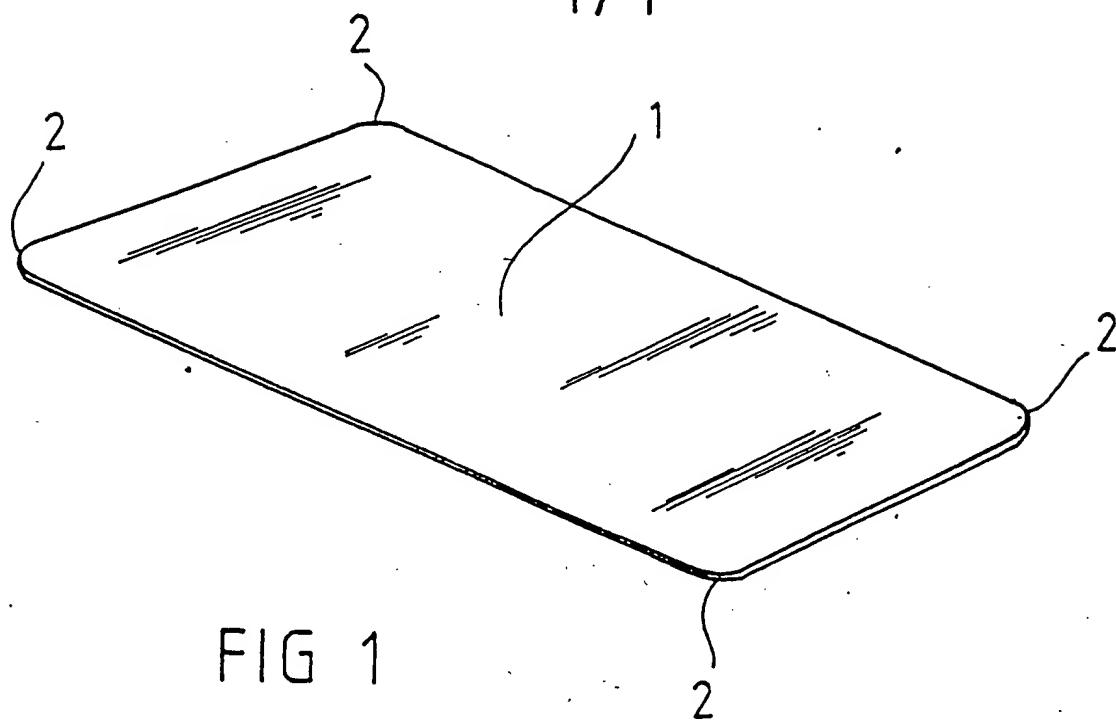


FIG 1

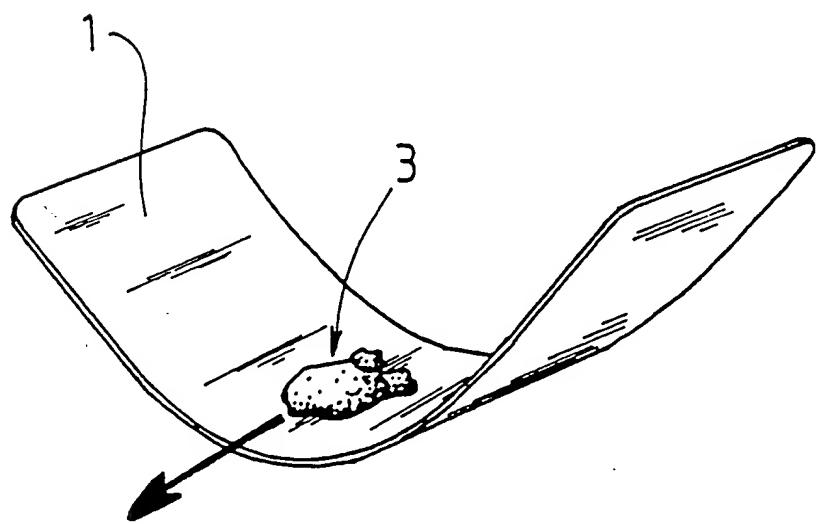


FIG 2

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FOOD PROCESSING MAT

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a food processing mat for use in the preparation or handling of food.

BACKGROUND

When preparing raw meat and other foodstuffs in commercial establishments it is not uncommon to perform cutting, grating or similar operations on a so-called chopping board. Such boards are traditionally of wood, although rigid plastics boards have started to come into use in recent times.

There has recently been a considerable increase in food hygiene awareness in such establishments which, among other things, has resulted in an increased use of chopping boards in order to avoid possible contamination of work surfaces with food poisoning organisms from raw meat, and to ensure that other foodstuffs such as fruit and vegetables are only brought into contact with clean surfaces during cutting and similar processing operations.

It has been observed that in use of the traditional chopping board the normal way of removing material from the board after the processing operation has been carried out is to lift the board and then scrape off

the material using a knife. It has been further noted that during this operation there is a high risk that any material adjacent to the edges of the board will drop off onto a worksurface, resulting in the above-mentioned contamination risks.

An object of the present invention may be viewed as being to provide the means whereby such food processing operations can be performed with greater hygiene.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention proposes a food processing mat comprising a flexible sheet of polypropylene or similar plastics material having a thickness of between 800 and 2,000 microns (0.8 and 2.0 mm), the mat being such that, in use, the mat can be formed into a guide channel to assist in tipping food from the mat.

The invention also proposes a food processing method comprising performing a cutting or similar food processing operation on a mat comprising a flexible sheet of polypropylene or similar plastics material having a thickness of between 800 and 2,000 microns (0.8 and 2.0 mm), forming the mat into a guide channel, and tipping the food from the mat such that it travels along the guide channel.

The use of polypropylene in the specified thickness range has been found to provide a mat which is not easily cut by knives and yet is easily cleaned, and which is flexible enough to be formed into a channel yet is rigid enough not to deform and cause unwanted

food spillage.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is exemplified in the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a food processing mat of the invention, and

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the mat, in use.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The mat comprises a flexible sheet 1 of polypropylene having a uniform thickness of about 1,200 microns (1.2 mm). Although polypropylene is preferred because it is flexible, tough and easily cleaned other, less preferable plastics could be used such as polythene for example. The mat is of rectangular shape with rounded corners 2, although, again, other less preferable shapes could be used.

In practice a set of such mats would be used for each processing a different kind of food material such as salads, fruit, vegetables, cooked meat, raw meat, raw fish and dairy produce. To ensure that the mats are not confused, and hence minimising the risk of cross-contamination, they each have the name of the appropriate foodstuff clearly printed upon their upper surface.

In use, the mat is placed flat on a worksurface such that a cutting or similar food processing operation can be performed on the mat. An advantage of polypropylene is that it is tough enough to ensure that even sharp kitchen knives will hardly penetrate its surface during normal use. On the other hand, when the operation has been completed the mat can be lifted and formed into a guide channel 3, as shown in Fig. 2. Any pieces of food or food waste can then be tipped along the guide channel into a clean receptacle or, in the case of waste, into a disposal bin. The risk of the food material falling from the mat is therefore minimal.

* * * * *

CLAIMS

1. A food processing mat comprising a flexible sheet of plastics material having a thickness of between 800 and 2,000 microns (0.8 and 2.0 mm), the flexibility of the mat being such that, in use, the mat can be formed into a guide channel to assist in tipping food from the mat.
2. A mat according to Claim 1 and which is formed of polypropylene.
3. A mat according to Claim 1 or 2, in which, in plan view, the mat is of rectangular shape with rounded corners.
4. A set of mats which are each in accordance with any preceding claim, the mats each being marked to indicate a different kind of foodstuff with which the respective mat is intended to be used.
5. A food processing method comprising performing a cutting or similar food processing operation on a mat comprising a flexible sheet of plastics material having a thickness of between 800 and 2,000 microns (0.8 and 2.0 mm), forming the mat into a guide channel, and tipping the food from the mat such that it travels along the guide channel.
6. A food processing mat which is substantially as described with reference to the drawings.

7. A food processing method which is substantially as described with reference to the drawings.

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Patents Act 1977
Examiner's report to Comptroller under
Section 17 (The Search Report)

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9016831.9

Relevant Technical fields

(i) UK CI (Edition K) A4C(CUS); A4A(ATS17)

Search Examiner

J A MULLEN

(ii) Int CI (Edition 5) A47J (47/00, 47/01)

Date of Search

9 DECEMBER 1991

Databases (see over)

(i) UK Patent Office

(ii) ONLINE DATABASE:WPI

Documents considered relevant following a search in respect of claims 1-7.

Category (see over)	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s)
X	GB 2196237 A (LIN PAC MOULDINGS LTD)	1 & 4 at least
X	GB 2179240 A (HEDONICA MARKETING LTD)	1-4 at least
X	GB 2143427 A (CATLING)	1,2 at least
X	GB 1299596 (HARBEN)	1 and 3 at least

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